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UNDP: TECHNICAL COOPERATION AMONG DEVELOPING COUNTRIES

Report of the Administrator

I. PURPOSE

1. The present report provides information on technical cooperation among developing countries (TCDC) during the biennium 1993-1994.

II. MEASURES TAKEN FOR THE USE OF TCDC

2. In accordance with the Special Programme Resources (SPR) allocation for TCDC (Subcategory B4) the Special Unit for TCDC has been implementing an overall strategy that places increased emphasis on strengthening the capacity of developing countries to manage the development process themselves. The activities that supported this strategy were carried out within the overall framework of four subprogrammes: (a) sensitization and information on the TCDC modality; (b) capacities and needs matching exercises and subject-specific workshops; (c) studies and evaluation; and (d) capacities enhancement for the application of TCDC.

3. Activities within these subprogrammes have focused on key sectors in support of sustainable human development. Capacities and needs matching exercises were held in Bangladesh (credit and poverty alleviation); Myanmar (coastal and inland fisheries/aquaculture); Nigeria (agriculture and rural development); Uganda (industry and support services); and Zimbabwe (mining). Each of these exercises resulted in an average of over 200 bilateral agreements for technical cooperation between participating developing countries. Subject-specific workshops were held in all of the regions and focused on interactive exchanges and consultations designed to share experiences and

know-how that will result in the replication of applicable technologies and approaches in an increased number of developing countries. These workshops have had a catalytic effect in mobilizing resources in the developing countries for the implementation of activities in high-priority areas such as poverty alleviation, resource mobilization/aid coordination, privatization, south-south trade development, urban and environmental management, micro-economic policy for transition economies, and networking among women community leaders. The sensitization and information subprogramme concentrated on the development of the TCDC-INRES databank on developing country institutional capacities by refining the information in the database and facilitating easier access to the information by potential users through the development of the INRES-LITE software package to potential users in Governments, UNDP country offices, United Nations specialized agencies, United Nations economic commissions and NGOs. Activities falling under the other two subprogrammes - Studies and Evaluations and Capacity Enhancement for the Application of TCDC - targeted priority development sectors, including the strengthening of institutional capacities for education through interuniversity cooperation in research; studies on African food production and processing technologies for commercialization; consultations and study for the preparation of a policy-oriented framework to improve the socio-economic conditions of women; and support for the preparation of a programme for improved health practices. The support provided under the subprogrammes further strengthened networking and twinning arrangements and promoted linkages between centres of excellence in the developing countries.

III. A STRATEGIC ORIENTATION AND NEW DIRECTIONS FOR TCDC

4. Within this broad framework, the Special Unit for TCDC has sought to promote a more strategic orientation in respect of its work by focusing the SPR programme on high-impact activities at both regional and interregional levels. For example, in collaboration with the Regional Bureau for Africa and the Regional Bureau for Asia and the Pacific, the Special Unit supported and participated in the Asia-Africa Forum held in Bandung, Indonesia in December 1994, which identified substantive areas for promoting the exchange of expertise and experiences among African countries and those of the Association of South-East Asian Nations. Another innovative initiative, which is forming the basis for strategic TCDC arrangements, is the Programme of Action for the Sustainable Development of Small Island Developing States adopted at the Global Conference for the Sustainable Development of SIDS held in Barbados in May 1994. Within the UNDP, the Special Unit has been designated as the Unit responsible for coordinating the follow-up to the Barbados Conference and is currently engaged in supporting the implementation of the Small Island Developing States Technical Assistance Programmes (SIDS/TAPs) on the basis of the feasibility study submitted on the subject to the General Assembly at its forth-ninth session. TCDC-INRES has undertaken the preparation of a computer-based directory of institutions and scholars with recognized expertise in the sustainable development of small island developing States. In addition, the Special Unit has sought to identify initiatives at the regional level designed to strengthen economic cooperation both within existing integration arrangements as well as outside the framework of such arrangements.

5. In general, the current TCDC strategy seeks to locate TCDC within the framework of broad programmes of economic cooperation among developing countries (ECDC) such as the Caracas Programme of Action, in order to ensure that it makes an optimal contribution to sustainable human development. In the context of the preparation for the World Summit for Social Development, the Fourth World Conference on Women and HABITAT II, the Special Unit supported a number of initiatives aimed at promoting an exchange of expertise and experiences among developing countries. The Special Unit is also cooperating closely with the Bureau for Policy and Programme Support in bringing together countries in different regions with a view to exchanging experiences on innovative approaches to urban management that can find practical application in other developing countries. Similarly the Unit has supported a study of alternative approaches to economic policy reform aimed at mitigating the adverse social impact on women associated with conventional adjustment programmes. This study was carried out in collaboration with the Gender-in-Development Programme (GIDP) and the United Nations Development Fund for Women (UNIFEM) and forms an important input in the Fourth World Conference on Women. The Unit has also assisted in strengthening UNDP relations with Governments and the United Nations specialized agencies in the promotion of a dynamic programme of TCDC and has laid the groundwork to collaborate more effectively with the regional bureaux and other units within UNDP on substantive issues in order to ensure the systematic integration of TCDC into IPF-funded programmes and projects.

6. During the two-year period under review, significant progress has been realized in promoting TCDC as a central element in technical cooperation activities. There has also been increased emphasis on the role of TCDC in promoting ECDC as an overall development strategy. The resulting heightened profile achieved by TCDC is reflected in the interest shown by major donor countries such as Japan, whose statement to the General Assembly at its forty-ninth session called for increased emphasis on south-south cooperation and its incorporation as a main theme in the Agenda for Development.

7. TCDC will also assume increasing importance and prominence in light of the adoption of General Assembly resolution 49/96 calling on the High-Level Committee for TCDC to include on the agenda of its ninth session an item on new directions for TCDC. The resulting decision of the ninth High-Level Committee in this regard will be taken into account by the Secretary-General in the preparation of a comprehensive report containing recommendations for strengthening and expanding south-south cooperation and the convening of an international conference on this subject.

8. The Special Unit undertook a series of internal and external consultations to prepare a report on new directions for TCDC for consideration by the High-Level Committee at its ninth session. This concludes that the TCDC concept remains valid and is likely to assume increased importance in the future in light of the changes occurring in the international system and their impact on the traditional structure of multilateral technical cooperation, creating increased opportunities for TCDC, based among other things on the increasing differentiation among developing countries. This comprehensive document makes recommendations for the re-orientation of existing practices and the development of new initiatives for expanded utilization of TCDC.

IV. GUIDELINES FOR THE REVIEW OF UNITED NATIONS DEVELOPMENT SYSTEM POLICIES AND PROCEDURES ON TCDC

9. In July 1993, following the eighth session of the High-Level Committee, a meeting of the United Nations agency TCDC focal points was convened to review the guidelines and exchange ideas on means for their application. It was decided that UNDP would issue a comprehensive document emphasizing the significance of Economic and Social Council resolution 1992/41 calling upon all parties in the development effort to support and give the TCDC option first consideration in technical cooperation activities. At the request of the United Nations agency focal points, the Special Unit also gave wide circulation to the TCDC strategy for the 1990s. It was also decided that the United Nations specialized agencies would take action to review and revise, if necessary, their respective policies and instructions relating to TCDC in light of the guidelines. The next meeting of the United Nations agency focal points was scheduled to take place immediately following the ninth session of the High-Level Committee.

V. EXECUTIVE BOARD ACTION

10. The Executive Board may wish to:

Take note, with satisfaction, of the utilization of the Special Programme Resources allocation for technical cooperation among developing countries as an instrument to strengthen the capacities of developing countries to manage the development process themselves;

Welcome the efforts of the United Nations Development Programme to promote a more strategic orientation for technical cooperation among developing countries activities by focusing the present programme on high-impact activities;

Note the contents of the report on New Directions for TCDC and the decisions adopted by the High-Level Committee at its ninth session;

Take appropriate action with regard to the promotion and implementation of technical cooperation among developing countries activities pursuant to Economic and Social Council resolution 1992/41, which calls on all parties in the development effort to give the technical cooperation among developing countries option "first consideration" in technical cooperation activities.